

February 18, 2016

Appropriations Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Committee Members:

First permit me to address you all by saying thank you. Thank you for your time and effort in working to make Connecticut great. In so doing, your task at hand is not an easy one. Please allow me to offer a few words to help with said process.

As the mother of two “Honey Bronze Jewels” and the grandparent of a “Mocha Dew Drop”, a Bubblin’ Brown Sugar Dumplin’ and a 1 year old “Sweet Potato Pie”, I, as one who lives the life of an agent of change and enlightenment, with warmth, passion and understanding, strongly encourage keeping the Connecticut Commission on Children whole.

The CT Commission on Children, (COC) has had a huge impact on the lives of children and families since 1985 locally and nationally. The COC has made strides with a staff of only 5 that many organizations would be hard pressed to meet. To think that over 60% of the 2015 revenue was secured by the COC through philanthropic and federal sources and given directly to leadership initiatives such as the Parent Leadership Training Institute, (PLTI) and pre-school curricula is outstanding to say the least. The fact that the COC designed the 1st two generational state policy in the nation speaks volumes to the mindset of the COC’s leadership and staff, a quality 2nd to none.

I have been an integral part of Bridgeport’s PLTI for 19 years. As a Civic Design Team member, Facilitator, Coordinator and Lead Teacher for the Children’s Leadership Training Institute, (CLTI), which was piloted here in Bridgeport 14 years ago, through the COC, I have witnessed children and parents alike as leaders, take the forefront in making policy change for the betterment of children in their communities, schools and engage in effective service in other civic arenas.

A 5 year old child was elected by her peers ages 3-13, to be the keynote speaker at her CLTI graduation. 6 months later she realized her civic responsibility when she saw children walking to school in the cold without coats. She started a coat drive as a solution. She is now an Assistant Teacher for CLTI. Graduates of PLTI have been elected to serve on the Board of Education, City Council and one is presently the Executive Director of the CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. I have witnessed very shy children, blossom into leaders and run for school president, speak before the City Council and volunteer as a White House Page. Their community projects help the abused, homeless and children in Africa and Haiti. In 2015 alone, upon graduation of PLTI, an increase of 34% spoke at community meetings and an increase of 63% contacted a public official. With over 300 of Bridgeport PLTI graduates, there are too many success stories to mention them all.

Your assignment may look unattractive and feel overbearing, yet may you gain strength as you blend with those of diverse backgrounds and culture, uniting plan with purpose, to benefit our children through the CT Commission on Children. It is my hope that you will be the best legislative champions on record to take the course of action that will build and uplift children and families through your decisions.

Sincerely,
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